

How do you Treat Chondritis and Pharyngitis?

Dwayne Rodgerson, DVM

Chondritis and pharyngitis actually describe two very different conditions that sometimes can occur together.

Equine pharyngitis describes a condition in which the diffusely located lymphoid tissue enlarges and results in numerous small bumps on the surface of the pharynx. This condition can also be described as lymphoid hyperplasia or follicular hyperplasia.

Lymphoid enlargement generally is caused by inflammation from a viral or bacterial infection. This often is observed in young horses and, in most cases, the inflammation is mild and self-limiting.

In more severe cases, the inflammation can affect the normal function of the pharynx leading to possible pharyngeal collapse or dorsal displacement of the soft palate.

Treatment involves the administration of anti-inflammatory agents and antibiotics. Anti-inflammatory agents can be applied topically using “throat spray” solutions. Throat sprays often contain corticosteroids that help treat inflammation within the pharynx.

Chondritis is inflammation of the laryngeal cartilages and most notably the arytenoid cartilage (arytenoid Chondritis).

The inflammation can be caused by trauma or a low grade infection involving the arytenoid cartilage. The affected arytenoid generally is enlarged and may have an ulcer or small elevated site of granulation tissue (called a granuloma).

The opposite arytenoid can develop a “kissing lesion” caused by contact with the affected arytenoid. The condition often is progressive and can lead to complete paralysis of the affected arytenoid. In some cases, horses can have difficulty breathing and make a loud respiratory noise.

Treatment should initially involve systemic anti-inflammatory agents and antibiotics. Local therapy consisting of antiseptics and corticosteroids (throat spray) also can be used.

A temporary or permanent tracheotomy may be necessary in cases of severe airway obstruction due to swelling of the affected area. Surgical removal of a granuloma on the arytenoid can be performed using a laser. In some cases, a portion of the affected arytenoid is removed (partial arytenoidectomy) to improve airflow and, potentially, athletic performance.

Lymphoid hyperplasia is typically present with pharyngitis. The small nodular swellings within the equine pharynx are an indication of lymphoid hyperplasia.

